

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 AID-20 EB-11 TRSE-00 CCO-00

CIAE-00 OTPE-00 FCC-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 OC-06 RSC-01

COME-00 OIC-04 ARA-16 EA-11 EUR-25 NEA-10 OMB-01

ABF-01 DRC-01 /145 W

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R 231405Z NOV 73

FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2693

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

UNCLAS GENEVA 6232

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETEL, ITU, AORG

SUBJECT: ITU

REF: STATE 227002

1. PAN-AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATION NETWORK (PANAFTTEL) MEETING HELD IN GENEVA NOV. 10-20. ATTENDEES INCLUDED CHAIRMAN A. LABIDI OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB), REPRESENTATIVES OF ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU), ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA), ITU, UNDP, VARIOUS OTHER INVESTMENT BANKS, AND PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS FROM FOLLOWING 17 COUNTRIES (ALGERIA, BELGIUM, BRAZIL, CANADA, FINLAND, FRANCE, WEST GERMANY, ITALY, JAPAN, NORWAY, ROMANIA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, UK, USA AND YUGOSLAVIA). MEETING CONCLUDED AFTER APPROXIMATELY FIVE HOURS OF DEBATE, BUT VERY LITTLE REAL PROGRESS.

2. AT OUTSET, CHAIRMAN LABIDI NOTED URGENCY OF GETTING ON WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF PANAFTTEL FUND AS BEST MEANS FOR COORDINATED EFFORT TO DEVELOP INTEGRATED AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM VOID ON ANY "WEAK LINKS." THIS FOLLOWED BY IMPASSIONED PLEAS FROM R.K. GARDINER (ECA) AND O. NYNNEQUE (OAU). BY CONCLUSION NOV. 19 ACTIVITIES, IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT THOUGH MANY POSSIBLE

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DONOR COUNTRIES WERE WILLING TO PAY LIP SERVICE TO NEED FOR PANAFTTEL

NETWORK, THEY IN NO POSITION TO PLEDGE FUNDS OR OTHERWISE COMMIT THEIR GOVERNMENTS AT THIS TIME, WHICH WAS OF COURSE LABIDI'S REASON FOR CALLING THE MEETING IN FIRST PLACE.

3. PRINCIPAL POINT OF CONTENTION CONCERNED QUESTION OF FINANCING. IN SPITE OF BEST EFFORTS LABIDI AND PANAFTTEL COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO PUSH FOR PANAFTTEL FUND WHICH WOULD BE ENTRUSTED WITH COORDINATION, MANAGEMENT AND EXPENDITURE OF MULTI-LATERAL CONTRIBUTIONS, IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT FEW, IF ANY COUNTRIES WERE READY TO SUPPORT THE IDEA OF A FUND WITH SUCH DIVERSE POWERS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND INDEPENDENCE. INTERVENTIONS BY UK, CANADA, FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY INDICATED PREFERENCE OF SOME MAJOR COUNTRIES FOR ALTERNATE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WOULD ALLOW FOR BI-LATERAL FINANCING BY POTENTIAL DONORS TO THOSE AFRICAN COUNTRIES/SUB-REGIONS THEY MIGHT SELECT AND WHICH WOULD GIVE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT TELECOM DEVELOPMENT IS A TRULY PRIORITY MATTER IN THEIR COUNTRIES. CHAIRMAN LATER SOLICITED VIEWS OF ALL OTHER PARTICIPANTS, MANY OF WHOM HAD NOTHING TO SAY. ACTING TELATT MADE STATEMENT AS SUGGESTED IN REF WITH NO ADDITIONS OR MODIFICATIONS. BY END NOV. 19, OAU REPRESENTATIVE WAS ACCUSING UK REP OF NOT ONLY FAILING TO SUPPORT THE FUND BUT OF ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING FOR OTHER DELEGATES TO DO THE SAME, BOTH OF WHICH ACCUSATIONS DID NOT APPEAR JUST FOUNDED, BUT WHICH NONETHELESS REFLECT THE FRUSTRATION WHICH WAS ALREADY BUILDING UP AMONG THE AFRICAN REPS.

4. BASIC PROBLEMS RE ESTABLISHMENT OF FUND, FINANCING PROGRAM AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT WERE DISCUSSED NOV. 20. FRENCH PTT REP POINTED OUT THAT MOST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES HAVE FINANCIAL SYSTEMS WHICH OPPOSE OR PROHIBIT THE CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT-ASSISTANCE FUNDS BY AN INDEPENDENT OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION, THIS CASE A PANAFTTEL FUND AS PROPOSED. HE THEN MADE AN "UNOFFICIAL" PROPOSAL CALLING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A PAN AFRICAN ORGANIZATION WITH SOME FORM OF ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL FOR SUPERVISION WHICH WOULD ALSO INCLUDE MEMBERS OF DONOR COUNTRIES AND OF FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEES TO IDENTIFY THOSE AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILLING TO ATTACH A PRIORITY LABEL TO TELECOM DEVELOPMENT AND TO DETERMINE POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR AND AMOUNTS REQUIRED OF BI-LATERAL, MULTI-LATERAL AND CO-FINANCING. ANY SUCH ORGANIZATION WOULD ALSO SERVE AS TECHNICAL CONTROL MECHANISM AND GUARANTEE CONTINUITY OF THE NETWORK PROJECT. SEVERAL DELEGATES EXPRESSED INTEREST IN FRENCH UNCLASSIFIED

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ALTERNATIVE AND REQUESTED COPIES OF THE FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR REVIEW AND FORWARDING TO THEIR ADMINISTRATIONS.

5. CHAIRMAN LABIDI FINALLY REALIZED HE RUNNING AGAINST THE WIND, THOUGH HE STATED HE COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE "MURDER" OF THE PANAFTTEL FUND AS PROPOSED BY THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHICH HAD GIVEN HIM HIS MANDATE. IT WAS FINALLY AGREED THAT A WORKING GROUP OF REPS FROM FRANCE, CANADA, SWEDEN,

GERMANY, UNDP, EEC AND WORLD BANK WOULD, IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE, STUDY THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS AND BE
PREPARED TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS BY TIME OF NEXT PANAFTTEL MEETING,
WHICH WILL OCCUR BEFORE END OF MARCH 1974.MILLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TELECOMMUNICATION, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973GENEVA06232
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: GENEVA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731117/aaaaamgz.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 227002
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kellerpr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24-Jan-2002 by bryansd0>; APPROVED <01-Feb-2002 by kellerpr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ITU
TAGS: ETEL, AORG, ITU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005